

**LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN --
DECLARING SUPPORT FOR THE GREEN NEW DEAL
AND AFFIRMING THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF CLIMATE JUSTICE
WITH ALL JUSTICE ISSUES**

Submitted by:
The VT Conference UCC
The Pacific Northwest Conference UCC
[Additional submitters and endorsers may be added before Synod]

A Resolution of Witness

SUMMARY:

This resolution provides Synod with the opportunity to declare its support for [the Green New Deal Resolution](#)¹ (H. Res. 109) released by Congress on February 7, 2019. The Green New Deal creates an opportunity for the United States to commit to goals and projects that are consistent with the UCC's decades-long advocacy of environmental, racial and economic justice. By declaring its support, Synod will proclaim the intersectionality of climate justice with all justice issues and offer a path of action and hope by which humanity can address the defining moral issues of our time.

BACKGROUND:

With the release of [the Green New Deal Resolution](#)² on February 7, 2019, Congress created an opportunity for the United States to commit to goals and projects that are consistent with the UCC's historical (and historic!) advocacy for racial, economic and environmental justice. The Green New Deal aspires to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs, provide for a just transition to clean and renewable energy and secure clean air and water.

Recognizing that climate change threatens the safety, health, and dignity of ordinary people, the authors of the Green New Deal have made environmental justice the heart of the resolution. The Green New Deal specifically names the "systemic injustices" that disproportionately affect "frontline and vulnerable communities" and provides a list of such communities that would be familiar to anyone who has read UCC justice resolutions over the past many decades: "indigenous communities, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth." Indeed, the genius of the resolution is that it identifies and seeks to address two interrelated crises: a climate crisis and a socio-economic crisis of wage stagnation and growing inequality.

In compliance with the Standing Rules of General Synod, this resolution is submitted as a so-called Emergency Resolution because the Congressional Resolution itself (H. Res. 109) was not released until February 7, 2019, well past the January 2, 2019, deadline for Standard Resolutions.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

Amos 5:24 (NRSV)

²⁴ ... *let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>

² <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>

36
37 **Psalm 24:1 (NRSV)**

38 ¹ *The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it*

39
40 **Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)**

41 ¹⁸ *Where there is no vision, the people perish*

42
43 As people of faith, we recognize that *the earth is the Lord's...* Nevertheless, Creation, God's great gift
44 – the context in which all life seeks fulfillment – is in crisis. The scientific consensus is unambiguous.
45 Climate change is real, it's caused by human activity, it's already happening, and it's accelerating. The
46 scale of Creation's demise is dramatically expanding beyond our comprehension.

47
48 The Green New Deal addresses this urgent crisis by offering America a comprehensive vision that, if
49 implemented, can save millions of lives even as it addresses economic inequalities, environmental
50 racism and other manifestations of climate injustice.

51
52 Our generation still has the power to bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice by reviving
53 creation. Indeed, by acting with the urgency and on the scale of the Green New Deal, we may still have
54 time to avoid the worst consequences of climate change as we seek to preserve God's great gift of
55 creation.

56
57
58 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

59
60 WHEREAS, the Green New Deal is rooted in the scientific findings from the October 2018 [Special](#)
61 [Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), which declares that carbon emissions
62 must be reduced by about fifty per cent before 2030 and completely phased out before 2050 if global
63 temperature rise is to be limited to 1.5°Celsius;³

64
65 WHEREAS, humanity is already contending with changes on a scale we can hardly comprehend, such
66 as:

- 67 • Rainfall from big storms is now measured in feet - not inches (e.g., Houston received five feet
68 (61") of rain from Hurricane Harvey).⁴
- 69 • The Earth's temperature is already well into the range that existed during the Eemian period,
70 120,000 years ago, when sea level was 20 to 30 feet higher than it is now.⁵
- 71 • The cost of catastrophic, unprecedented flooding in the Midwest in the spring of 2019 is well
72 over \$3 billion.⁶

³ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2018/09/19/meteorology-behind-hurricane-florences-historic-rain-flooding/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.7a32682e6a21

⁵ Jeff Goodell, "Will We Miss Our Last Chance to Save the World From Climate Change?" *Rolling Stone*, December 22, 2016, accessed September 14, 2017, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/will-we-miss-our-last-chance-to-survive-climate-change-w456917>

⁶ <https://www.vox.com/2019/3/22/18277244/nebraska-flood-2019>

- “Not since World War II have more human beings been at risk from disease and starvation than at this very moment.” Climate change is the primary cause of droughts, which are increasingly rendering areas in Africa uninhabitable.⁷
- Recognizing that the sixth mass extinction in geological history is now underway, biologists are using the term “Biological Annihilation” as species are going extinct at at least 100 times the normal rate;⁸

WHEREAS, the urgency of the climate crisis is accelerating faster than anyone imagined. For example:

- In January, 2019, scientists learned that the oceans are warming 40% faster than they had previously thought.⁹
- As the oceans absorb CO₂, they are becoming more acidic at a frightening rate in excess of any change the world has seen in 300 million years;¹⁰

WHEREAS, climate change multiplies and accelerates injustice by hitting the poorest people and people of color first and worst because it’s the poorest people and people of color who typically live in areas most likely to flood, most prone to disease, and most subject to the droughts, heat-waves and various diseases that are now migrating on account of climate change.

WHEREAS, climate change is creating and accelerating a health crisis in our inner cities that gets worse each summer, especially as rising temperatures create urban heat islands responsible for more and more cases of asthma that are disabling – and killing – children and elderly people of color.

WHEREAS, those most affected by climate change have not caused it and are powerless to stop it. For example, the farmers in parts of Africa who are losing their lands either to drought or to unprecedented flooding have a carbon footprint that is 1/200th the carbon footprint of the average American;

WHEREAS, the people and institutions who actually caused and are causing climate change aren’t being held accountable for the catastrophic damage climate change is already causing;

WHEREAS, the Green New Deal acknowledges the necessity of assuming moral responsibility for intergenerational harm caused by failure to act on climate change and the urgency of taking action on a comprehensive scale to reduce the catastrophe future generations will inherit;

WHEREAS, on March 15, 2019, more than 1,400,000 young people in 128 countries, in over 2,200 cities and towns, and on every continent (including Antarctica) walked out of their schools on a school strike for climate action – the biggest day of global climate action ever – insisting that, in the words of 16-year old Greta Thunberg, initiator of the school strike for the climate and Nobel Prize nominee, “We

⁷ Jeffrey Gettleman, “Loss of Fertile Land Fuels ‘Looming Crisis’ Across Africa,” *New York Times*, July 30, 2017, accessed September 14, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/29/world/africa/africa-climate-change-kenya-land-disputes.html?_r=0

⁸ Tatiana Schlossberg, “Era of ‘Biological Annihilation’ Is Underway, Scientists Warn,” *New York Times*, July 11, 2017, accessed September 14, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/11/climate/mass-extinction-animal-species.html?mcubz=1>

⁹ https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/10/climate/ocean-warming-climate-change.html?emc=edit_th_190111&nl=todaysheadlines&nliid=543283340111

¹⁰ Hönlisch, et al., “The Geological Record of Ocean Acidification,” *Science*, March 2, 2012, 1058-1063.

need a whole new way of thinking...we need to start cooperating and sharing the remaining resources of this planet in a fair way”;¹¹

WHEREAS, in 2017, 97% of Synod delegates acknowledged the profound moral implications of climate change by voting to “declare a new moral era,” and committing to the “moral imperative” of urging “clergy to speak from their pulpits about the moral obligation of our generation to protect God’s creation”;

WHEREAS, the two interfaith environmental organizations with which the United Church of Christ partners - [Interfaith Power and Light](#) (a national organization with affiliates in almost every state) and [Greenfaith](#) - describe the Green New Deal as “a tangible expression of key values that animate [our] vision of a better world” and as “a profound moral opportunity” because the Green New Deal is informed by truth and science, driven by urgency, far reaching in its scale and comprehensive in its goals;¹²

WHEREAS, Yale researchers say 81% of the voters they polled support a Green New Deal to create jobs and work toward renewable energy;¹²

WHEREAS, scores of scientists have spoken out in favor of the Green New Deal, including Stanford Professor Mark Jacobson, whose research demonstrates that each of the 50 states can establish a zero-emissions economy by 2035 and who says, “Right now, we have about ninety per cent or ninety-five per cent of the technology we need.... We don’t need a technological miracle to solve this problem. The bottom line is we just need to deploy, deploy, deploy”;¹³

WHEREAS, on February 8, 2019, [the executive leadership of the United Church of Christ endorsed the Green New Deal](#);¹⁴

WHEREAS, over the past 50+ years the UCC, along with religious leaders from other faiths and denominations, has issued countless statements on the goodness of Creation and our call to act as responsible environmental stewards, all of which has been an insufficient witness;

WHEREAS, the Core Purpose of the United Church of Christ states (in part): “... we serve God in the co-creation of a just and sustainable world as made manifest in the Gospel of Jesus Christ”; and

WHEREAS, this historic moment provides Christian communities with a powerful opportunity to bear witness to the sacredness of God’s Creation and the urgent call to preserve it, and responding to this call expresses the new mission initiative of the UCC known as [the three great loves](#), one of which is love of creation;

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/19/school-climate-strikes-more-than-1-million-took-part-say-campaigners-greta-thunberg>

¹² http://salsa4.salsalabs.com/o/50836/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=25983 and <https://greenfaith.org/greennewdeal#>

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/26/green-new-deal-climate-change-democrats>

¹³ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-good-news-about-a-green-new-deal>

¹⁴ http://www.ucc.org/news_the_green_new_deal_legislating_environmental_justice_02082019

149 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of
150 Christ, in keeping with numerous resolutions passed by previous General Synods, recognizes the scale
151 and immediacy of the climate crisis, the urgent need to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions as
152 soon as possible, and the moral obligation to embrace the unprecedented socio-economic changes that
153 we must effect and engage **as opportunities** to create fair paying jobs, secure clean air and water,
154 redress manifestations of environmental racism and pursue a just transition to clean and renewable
155 energy.

156
157 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ
158 joins [the executive leadership of the United Church of Christ](#)¹⁵ and the United Church of Christ Council
159 for Climate Justice (with representatives from all geographic conferences of the UCC) in endorsing [the](#)
160 [Green New Deal Resolution](#)¹⁶ (H. Res. 109) released by Congress on February 7, 2019.

161
162 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ
163 calls upon the whole of the church to accept the moral responsibility that comes with living “at such a
164 time as this” (Esther 4:14) by:

- 165 • Standing up for the critical role science must play in understanding the challenges that now pose
166 an existential threat to life as we have known it on this planet;
- 167 • Continuing to learn from scientifically informed sources about the new realities and new
168 solutions that are emerging every day;
- 169 • Discussing climate change with increasing frequency at church, at home, at work and in our
170 social encounters, emphasizing how it threatens things we all value while noting that we already
171 have all the technology we need¹⁷ to achieve the goals of the Green New Deal;
- 172 • Incorporating into our worship life and community leadership an awareness of climate change,
173 its consequences (especially for vulnerable, frontline communities), and the opportunities we still
174 have to make the changes science says we must and technology says we can;
- 175 • Helping our communities to be more prepared for extreme weather events and more resilient to a
176 changing climate in the long term;
- 177 • Lifting up the reality that many people, regardless of their political affiliation or allegiance,
178 support the Green New Deal because it addresses not only climate change but also numerous
179 forms of injustice;
- 180 • Paying attention as federal, state and local agencies develop and propose new policies that
181 impact our environment and engaging those agencies as advocates for policies and legislation
182 that advance the goals of the Green New Deal, including its commitment to address the
183 “systemic injustices” that disproportionately affect “frontline and vulnerable communities”;
- 184 • Maintaining a commitment to compassion and fairness by advocating for a just transition for
185 those workers and communities most dependent on fossil fuel energy so that they, too, have
186 opportunities for clean, healthful and family-supporting jobs that heal our planet.

187 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ
188 calls upon the whole of the church to accept that it is up to us to pour ourselves out to bend the moral arc
189 of the universe towards justice, with joy in our hearts, beauty in our sights, and hope for the children.
190
191

¹⁵ http://www.ucc.org/news_the_green_new_deal_legislating_environmental_justice_02082019

¹⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>

¹⁷ <https://web.stanford.edu/group/efmh/jacobson/Articles/I/100Pct-WWS-Papers.pdf> and <https://thesolutionsproject.org/>
and <https://www.100.org/>

192 **FUNDING**

193 Funding for the implementation of this Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates
194 of the affected agencies and the funds available.

195

196 **IMPLEMENTATION**

197 The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the
198 United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.